

## **Clarendon County Fire Department History**

### **Volunteerism**

The man who established the first *volunteer* fire department also invented bifocals, wrote and printed Poor Richard's Almanac, studied electricity and helped draft the Declaration of Independence. His name was **Benjamin Franklin**. The first volunteer fire department began in Philadelphia in 1736.

Franklin often wrote about the dangers of fire and the need for organized fire protection. He was dissatisfied with Boston's Mutual Fire Societies (also known as "Fire Clubs") because the "Fire Clubs" existed solely for the protection of its members, not the community at large. Franklin wanted organizations that would battle all fires, regardless of whose property was burning.

After an extensive fire in Philadelphia in 1736, Franklin established the first all-volunteer fire brigade which was known as The Union Fire company which was comprised of 30 volunteers. As the idea of volunteer fire brigades gained popularity, additional companies were formed in Philadelphia. Each of the companies paid for their own equipment and located it throughout town at strategic places.

Other famous Americans who served as volunteer firefighters include: **George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, Paul Revere, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, John Barry, Aaron Burr, Benedict Arnold, James Buchanan** and **Millard Fillmore**.

Volunteer firefighters played and continue to play an invaluable role in protecting lives and property.

---

### **CCFD Badge**

We take great pride in the design of our department badge. Each element of our badge has special meaning. CCFD members wear this badge with honor.

In addition to being a symbol of our great nation, the eagle at the top of the badge symbolizes **vigilance**.

The center, or heart, of the badge is the traditional Maltese Cross. The Maltese Cross represents **charity, loyalty, gallantry, generosity** to friend and foe, **dexterity** of service, and **protection** of the weak. It is also carried to honor those who carried the insignia before us.

The badge serves as a shield which represents protection from danger. The badge is made of gold for officers and silver for firefighters. Both are precious, refined metals. This represents that firefighters must be of good character and temperate in habits. The gold or silver also symbolizes that firefighters, like gold or silver, will withstand trial by fire and still remain. Thus, the shield is a symbol of **protection, character, and strength**.

In the center of the cross is the Seal of the State of South Carolina. On the left side of the Seal, the palmetto tree springs from a fallen oak tree, which represents the British ships that South Carolina patriots defeated at Sullivan's Island in 1776. The shields on the palmetto trunk give the dates of the Declaration of Independence (4 July 1776) and the date that South Carolina adopted its first state constitution (26 March 1776). The motto on the banner means "who shall separate?" The words under the tree trunk translate to "Having fallen it has set up a better." ANIMIS OPIBUSQUE PARATI means "Prepared in mind and resources." On the right side of the Seal, the woman represents hope overcoming danger, and the laurel branch in her hand symbolizes the victory at Sullivan's Island. SPES means hope. DUM SPIRO SPERO means "While I breathe, I hope". DUM SPIRO SPERO and ANIMIS OPIBUSQUE PARATI are the state mottoes.

---

### CCFD Patch

Our patch was designed by Carter H. Jones, the first Fire Chief of our department, and part of the founding leadership of our organization. We also take great pride in the design of our department's patch. Each element of our patch has special meaning. CCFD members wear this patch with honor.

The patch takes the shape of the Maltese Cross. The Maltese Cross represents **charity, loyalty, gallantry, generosity** to friend and foe, **dexterity** of service, and **protection** of the weak. The Maltese Cross is your symbol of protection. It means that the firefighter that wears this cross is willing to lay down his or her life for you, just as the crusaders sacrificed their lives for their fellow man so many years ago. It is also carried to honor those who carried the insignia before us. At the center of the Maltese Cross is the Palmetto tree, the state tree of South Carolina, which dates back to the Revolutionary War. In 1776, colonists in a small fort built of Palmetto logs successfully defeated a British fleet trying to capture Charleston Harbor. Since then, South Carolina has been called "The Palmetto State." In addition to the Palmetto Tree, at the center of the Maltese Cross is the cannon. The cannon is a significant symbol for Clarendon County and our area's involvement in the Revolutionary War, with several major battles fought on the grounds we now protect.

The main colors of the patch are red and gold. The color red represents courage and valor. The gold circle surrounding the center stands for unwavering, unending character in service.

In the top and bottom sections of the Maltese Cross is the name of the community which we serve, Clarendon County. In the right section of the Maltese Cross is the ladder and pike pole, which represent the specialized tools of the firefighting trade. In the left section of the Maltese Cross is a flame, representing our enemy – fire – and the courage of the men and women who battle one of the deadliest perils of mankind. It is the fire inside each one of us that gives us the courage to battle the flames before us.

Written within the gold circle surrounding the center are the words "Fire/Rescue" which details our expanded mission. In 1997, 20 years after the formation of the Clarendon County Fire Department, the department's mission expanded to include rescue and extrication services formally handled by local rescue squads. These

rescue squads were run by dedicated men and women, however a lack of funding would not allow the squads to grow with the needs of the community. Also written within the gold circle is "Est. 1977", which was the year the department was formed.

---

### The Maltese Cross



The badge of a firefighter is the Maltese Cross. The Maltese Cross is a symbol of protection, a badge of honor, and its story is hundreds of years old. When a courageous band of crusaders, known as the Knights of St. John, fought the Saracens for possession of the Holy Land, they were faced with a new weapon unknown to European fighters. It was a simple but horrible device. The Saracens' weapon was fire.

As the crusaders advanced on the walls of the city, they were bombarded with glass bombs containing naphtha. When they were saturated with the liquid, the Saracens threw flaming torches into the crusaders. Hundreds of knights were burned alive while others risked their lives in an effort to save their kinsmen from painful fiery deaths. Thus these men became the first firemen, and the first of a long line of firefighters. Their heroic efforts were recognized by fellow crusaders who awarded each other with a badge of honor similar to the cross firefighters wear today.

Since the Knights of St. John lived for close to four centuries on the island of Malta, in the Mediterranean Sea, the cross came to be known as the Maltese Cross. The Maltese Cross is your symbol of protection. It means that the firefighter that wears this cross is willing to lay down his or her life for you, just as the crusaders sacrificed their lives for their fellow man so many years ago. The Maltese Cross is a firefighter's badge of honor signifying that he or she works in courage – a ladder rung away from death.\*

*\*This section excerpted from Pride and Ownership, by Rick Lasky*

---

### The "Scramble"

It is a collection of items that represent readiness. The speaking trumpet represents **leadership** and is from the days when fire officers would use the speaking trumpet to direct personnel. The helmet represents **safety**. The ladder represents the specialized tools of the firefighting trade. Combined, the "scramble" symbolizes total **readiness**.

---

## The Dalmatian



One of the most beloved symbols of the fire service is the Dalmatian dog. The origins of the breed are shrouded in mystery. Experts are unsure really how old the breed is.

It is known that the Dalmatian, because of its poor hunting abilities, was relegated to the stable area of fine homes. It was in these stables that the Dalmatian became acquainted with the horses. Dalmatians were adopted by the fire service in the days of the horse-drawn fire wagons because they were agile and not afraid of the horses. The Dalmatian, with its superior agility and endurance could run out in front of the horses and clear the streets for the approaching fire wagon. When the horses were replaced by gasoline-driven fire engines, many fire departments kept their Dalmatians. In some areas you can still see the Dalmatian standing proudly on top of the fire engine as it races to another emergency.

---

## Arson Dogs



In the 1980s, the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms led the way in reintroducing dogs to active roles in the fire service by training the first accelerant-detecting canine. A yellow Labrador named Nellie was the first dog trained as part of a pilot program in 1984. Nellie's performance was validated by the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. In 1986, ATF established the National Canine Accelerant Detection Program. Mattie, the first "operational"

canine was deployed that September. Both dogs were acquired from guide dog programs.

Canines can pinpoint traces that escape electronic detection. Mechanical hydrocarbon detectors are sensitive to gasoline components in parts per million (ppm). The smallest amount detectable by dogs is .01 micro liters, or 1,000<sup>th</sup> of a drop, of 50% evaporated gasoline, 100% of the time. Also, a canine can differentiate between products of combustions and similar chemical gases found at fire scenes from true accelerants, which mechanical detectors cannot.\*

Canines are more adaptable and more accurate than mechanical equipment. This accuracy can help pinpoint the location of accelerants in a shorter time, thereby reducing the field time of investigators searching and processing a fire scene. The use of canines can reduce the number of samples that need to be collected and tested. It is also documented that samples submitted from canine teams for laboratory analysis result in a positive test for ignitable liquids over 90% of the time, compared to 30% for the investigators alone.\*

The Clarendon County Fire Department had such an asset in "Widget", the department's Accelerant Detection Canine. "Widget" joined our department in 1994,

adding to our already active cause and origin program. Widget's handler, then Asst. Chief Frances Richbourg, is now the Chief of Department.

\*Excerpted from <http://www.dallasfirerescue.com/k9.htm>

---

### **Red Fire Engines, White Fire Engines, Red Stripes**

The most widely-accepted reason that fire engines are painted red dates back to the 1800s -- a time when there was a LOT of competition between the fire brigades of neighboring cities and towns. The firefighters of each brigade took great pride in their pump. Each brigade wanted their rig stand out by being the cleanest, having the most brass, or being a regal color. Because red was the most expensive color, that's what color most crews chose to paint the pump.

Other sources cite the tradition of painting fire engines red going back to the early 1920's. Henry Ford wanted to make cars as inexpensively as possible and only offered cars in one color: black. With all of these black vehicles on the road, the fire service began painting their vehicles red in an effort to stand out.

Today, just as you have many more choices of colors available to you for your vehicle, so do the fire engine manufacturers, and it is not uncommon to see white, yellow, blue, orange, green, or even black fire engines, in addition to red. And while some studies hint that colors such as lime-green may be more visible to the public than traditional red, the vast majority of fire departments continue to use red fire engines -- a color instantly recognized by everyone as that of a fire engine.

So, why are the Clarendon County Fire Department's apparatus white? When the department was formed in 1977, it was under a lot of scrutiny from taxpayers wanting to know what they were getting for their money from this "new" fire department. Since all of the town fire departments' engines were red, it was decided that the county apparatus would be painted white. The new white fire engines were instantly distinguishable as "county engines". All of our apparatus also display a red stripe, holding to the tradition of significance of the color red in the fire service.

And while we're on the subject of engine, our department has always and will always use the "OSHA approved, audible warning device", traditional mechanical wailing sirens on fire apparatus. The theory goes, if the lights don't dim on the rig when you slam your foot on the siren button, forget it!\*

*\*This section excerpted from [Firehouse.com](http://www.firehouse.com)*

---

## Shamrocks Associated With Fire Department Truck Companies

*"O Paddy dear, and did ye hear the news that's goin' round  
The shamrock is by law forbid to grow on Irish ground!  
No more St. Patrick's Day we'll keep, his colors can't be seen  
For there's a cruel law ag'in the Wearin' o' the Green ..."*



When the Irish and Scottish immigrated to this country following the great potato famine, they brought many of their traditions with them. Work for these immigrants was often very difficult to find. Factories and shops displayed signs reading "NINA" meaning No Irish Need Apply. The only jobs they could get were the civil service jobs that were dirty, dangerous or both -- firefighters and police officers -- jobs that no one else wanted.

Irish-American firefighters began affixing images of the shamrock to their apparatus and their person not only as a display of Irish-American pride, but also as an inconspicuous message to their fellow Irishmen advertising that the fire service is a place that can't discriminate against them.

Today, by tradition, most truck companies have a shamrock somewhere in their logo, on their apparatus, or on their helmet. Irish-American firefighters usually display a shamrock somewhere on their gear, as well, to channel the "luck of the Irish".

---

## Helmet Colors

There is no "set in stone" standard for the color of helmets. Until the 1980's it was common for firefighters to have black helmets. Only chiefs had a different color and that was white. Officers would have an emblem on their black helmets. New helmet design gives us a choice of colors. Captains often have red helmets and Chiefs are usually white. A national consensus is emerging but some departments apparently are clinging to their own traditions. Some departments will have a color for lieutenants while others do not. You may find that EMS personnel have a specific color of helmet in some communities while in others they simply reflect the rank. In the western part of the U. S., officers will have red or white helmets while firefighters (the rank) will have yellow. As you go east you will find black as the more common color for firefighters. LA has yellow helmets. NY has black. Dallas has yellow for non-officers while Houston uses black for firefighters. Luckily you will often find a written out rank position on the helmet.\*

You may also find different styles of helmets within the same department. This may mean nothing. A department may decide to go to a different style of helmet as replacements are needed. Some departments allow members to purchase their own helmets. Even personally owned gear must comply with national safety standards.\*

Clarendon County Fire Department helmet colors indicate the following:

- White – Chief, Asst. Chief, Dep. Chief, Batt. Chief, Captain, Chaplain
- Red - Lieutenant
- Black - Firefighter
- Blue – Safety Officer
- Blue Reflective Dots – Members not certified on use of SCBA

A helmet is a very personal thing to a firefighter. They are typically decorated with stickers and insignia that are personal representations of each firefighter. Many firefighters keep pictures of loved ones in the top of their helmet.

Recruits wear the “metro” style helmets until they graduate from recruit school, at which time they are issued their black traditional style helmet.

*\*Excerpted from ['Fire Department History, Terminology, and Tactics'](#) by Captain Mica Calfee*

---

### First Water

The term "First Water" actually dates back to the 1800's when fire departments actually competed with one another. When two departments were in the same area, the town would often only pay the first fire department on scene, while the second received nothing. In other areas it was a matter of pride. The first department to put water on the fire would claim "First Water" and, in a way, get credit for fighting that fire. Some departments even hired young kids who would race to a fire on foot and throw a single bucket of water on the flames. This usually did very little or nothing to fight the fire, but it would earn that department the right to claim "First Water".

The phrase is still used in some areas today. When a department is called out to a fire they will often refer to three events: Dispatch time, On scene time, and time of First Water, the moment when the first fire stream actually begins fighting the fire.

---

### Star of Life



Just as physicians have the caduceus, emergency medical service personnel have the Star of Life. The six-barred cross represents the six system functions of emergency medical services: **Detection, Reporting, Response, On Scene Care, Care in Transit, and Transfer to Definitive Care.**

The snake and the staff in the center of the Star of Life portray the staff of Asclepius who, according to Greek mythology, was the son of Apollo, the god of light, truth, and prophecy. According to legend, Asclepius learned the art of healing from Cheron, the centaur. But Zeus, king of the gods, was fearful that, with Asclepius' knowledge, men might be rendered immortal. Rather than have this occur, Zeus killed Asclepius with a thunderbolt. Asclepius was worshipped as a god and people slept in his temples, as it was rumored that, in death, he effected cures of prescribed remedies to the sick during their dreams.

Asclepius is usually shown in a standing position, dressed in a long cloak, holding a staff with a serpent coiled around it. The staff has come to represent medicine's most recognized symbol. In the caduceus, used by physicians, the staff is winged, with two serpents intertwined. Although it holds no known medical relevance, it represents the magic wand of the Greek deity, Hermes, messenger of the gods.

In Numbers 21:9, the Bible also makes reference to a serpent on a staff. "So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived."

On September 23, 1973, NHTSA adopted a symbol which clearly and distinctively identifies emergency care within the total spectrum of the Emergency Medical Care System. The "Star of Life" had already been identified by the medical profession as a medical emergency symbol, and its use encouraged by the American Medical Association.\*

On September 14, 1977, the Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks issued to the Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Certificate of Registration No. 1,058,022, for the "Star of Life" symbol as a certification mark.\*

Among other specifications, the memorandum to NHTSA stated that the Star of Life should be:

On shoulder patches to be worn only by personnel having satisfactorily completed any of the DOT training courses, or approved equivalent and those personnel who, by title and function, administer, directly supervise, or otherwise participate in all or part of a national, state, or community EMS program or service in accordance with DOT criteria for Standard 11 which included the EMD.\*

*This included a specific color scheme for the Star of Life patch to be worn by emergency communications personnel once certified as an EMD.\**

\*DOT Pamphlet DOT HS 803 721, January 1979

---

## **Bagpipes at Fire Department Funerals**

The tradition of bagpipes being played at fire department funerals in the United States goes back over one hundred and fifty years. When the Irish and Scottish immigrated to this country, they brought many of their traditions with them. One of these was the bagpipe, often played at Celtic weddings, funerals and dances.

It wasn't until the great potato famine and massive Irish immigration to the East Coast of the United States that the tradition of the pipes really took hold in fire departments. Factories and shops had signs reading "NINA" meaning No Irish Need Apply. The only jobs they could get were the ones no one else wanted -- jobs that were dirty, dangerous or both -- firefighters and police officers. It was not an uncommon event to have several firefighters killed at a working fire. The Irish firefighters funerals were typical of all Irish funerals-the pipes were played. It was

somehow okay for a hardened firefighter to cry at the sound of pipes when his dignity would not let him weep for a fallen comrade.

Those who have been to funerals when bagpipes play know how haunting and mournful the sound of the pipes can be. Before too long, families and friends of non-Irish firefighters began asking for the piper to play for these fallen heroes. The pipes add a special air and dignity to the solemn occasion.

Today, the tradition is universal and not just for the Irish or Scottish. The pipes have come to be a distinguishing feature of a fallen hero's funeral.

*Excerpted from Ohio Fire Chief, July 1997*

---

## **Female Firefighters**

\*Historical Note: The first recorded female firefighter in the United States was an African-American named Molly Williams who worked on Oceanus Company No. 11 in the 1780s. Our current Chief, Frances A. Richbourg, was the first female President of the South Carolina Firefighters' Association.

*\*Excerpted from [Boston Society of Vulcans of Mass Inc](#)*

---

## **Tolling of the Bell**

Long before the Internet was invented, or telephones and radios were used across our great nation, fire departments used the telegraph to communicate - using special codes to receive fire alarms from those once-familiar red fire alarm boxes which stood on practically every street corner of America.

When a firefighter was killed, or in the language of the military and public safety: "fell", in the line of duty, the fire alarm office would tap out a special signal. This would be tapped out as five measured dashes - then a pause - then five measured dashes - then a pause - then five more measured dashes.

This came to be called the Tolling of the Bell and was broadcast over the telegraph fire alarm circuits to all station houses in the vicinity. Heard outside on the streets - with the fire department's windows open, the resonating echo was similar to that of fire stations of old where fire alarm gongs sounded the locations of thousands of emergencies throughout the history of our growing country.

This was done for the purpose of notification, and as a sign of honor and respect for all firefighters who had made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their communities.

Such symbolism has been a time-honored fire service tradition and is repeated at each service of a fallen firefighter.

---

### Firefighter's Prayer

When I am called to duty, God, whenever flames may rage;  
Give me strength to save some life, whatever be its age.  
Help me embrace a little child before it is too late  
Or save an older person from the horror of that fate.  
Enable me to be alert and hear the weakest shout,  
And quickly and efficiently to put the fire out.  
I want to fill my calling to give the best in me,  
To guard my every neighbor and protect their property.  
And if, according to my fate, I am to lose my life;  
Please bless with your protecting hand my children and my wife.

Author unknown

---

### Other Traditions

Other traditions in the fire service happen on a larger scale. Some of these include sending department representatives to the funeral of a firefighter lost in the line of duty in a neighboring community, in the next state, or clear across the country. It doesn't matter whether we personally knew the person or not, its just tradition that we show our respects towards our fellow brother or sister in the fire service. These heroes paid the ultimate sacrifice of dying in the line of duty. **We remember** these individuals, we memorialize their lives, and thank them for their service.

---

### Outdated Traditions

There are some things from the past that many old-timers recall fondly but for one reason or another (many due to safety) have been discontinued. These include:

- Rubber pull-up boots
- No air packs
- 15-minute air packs (there was nothing like knowing you had about 8-10 minutes inside)
- Breathing off the nozzle
- Beacon rays
- Bells (these are starting to reappear)
- Plectrons
- House sirens
- Navy nozzles
- Foam powder
- Protein foam (made from ground up animal matter)
- Riding the hose bed

- Riding the tailboard and the sides of the rig
- Brass firehouse poles